

RSN TRANSPORT GROUPS.

1. INTRODUCTION.

We are maybe towards the middle of the austerity years and the 'easy' targets of joint administration etc have long since been tackled. The current budget cuts will be at the core of the services themselves and because of the incremental impact of services the cuts that fall after the election will be particularly damaging. The impacts are likely to be ever more significant. Rural Transport has been hit hard already and it's subsidy as a supposed 'discretionary' service it is likely to be constantly under threat.

We have set up a news based service specific to three identified areas where rural is vulnerable and transport is one of these but we would wish to go further.

Discussion forums can obviously themselves only go so far but we do feel we should be doing what we are able and we would wish to deal with this massive problem as comprehensively as possible. We would suggest here we set up two discussion arrangements.

2. PROPOSAL.

RURAL TRANSPORT FOR ENGLAND WORKING GROUP

We feel a working group meeting twice a year which involves nominated local authority transport officers, operator representatives and representatives from user and promotional groups (say Bus Users UK and the Campaign for Better Transport) with Community Transport and say ACRE would be of value. Our initial wish would be to keep this grouping as tight as possible with possibly 2 representatives from each sector.

It would be for the group to identify its own terms of reference but a starter for ten might be:-

- (a) To examine all available options for the retention (and possible extension) of bus services in rural areas
- (b) To argue for all factors that facilitate (a) above
- (c) To examine technological advances that may facilitate (a) above
- (d) To seek annually to produce a consensus report acceptable to all represented parties detailing the problems relating to rural transport and the practical options seen as available that can it is believed assist.

RURAL TRANSPORT LIAISON GROUP

This might be a grouping of Transport Officers from interested authorities meeting twice a year with representatives from say 3 operators of varying size of fleet to discuss strategically the position nationally particularly from the local authority and transport officer's perspective and identify what has or has not worked in certain areas.

Again terms of reference would need to be agreed by those present but might start as:-

- (a) To facilitate a dialogue on the national situation between transport authorities and franchise operators
- (b) To seek to establish key objectives that will assist in the provision of passenger transport in rural areas.
- (c) To establish common agendas wherever possible.

The group would seek to work with the All Party Group on Rural Services and possibly through the Efra Select Committee.

3. CONCLUSION.

There is a massive threat in rural areas being occasioned by the Rural Transport situation. We really need to be at the centre of this working hard to identify options and areas of lateral thinking. A Working Group and a Liaison Group would be key activities.